



BRULE RIVER STATE FOREST MASTER PLAN FACT SHEET

Wildlife

Current Uses

Little detailed information exists on use of wildlife resources on the BRSF. Wildlife viewing probably ranks first in overall use, but usually occurs in conjunction with other activities such as canoeing, fishing, and sightseeing. Hunting, trapping, and photography are the next most common wildlife related activities.

Wildlife viewing and photography opportunities are abundant and very diverse on the BRSF. The diversity of wildlife is influenced by habitats such as wetlands, pine barrens, grasslands, shrub-lands, pine forests, maple forests, aspen forests, and boreal forests. The diverse terrain and soil types as well as the Brule River itself influence this variety of habitats. Minimums of 200 species of birds have been recorded using the BRSF. Such rare birds as the black-backed woodpecker, white-winged crossbill, merlin, great gray owl, and goshawk have been seen and likely nest on the property. Uncommon animals such as badger, bobcat, and timber wolves can be found on the BRSF.

Deer and grouse are the most commonly hunted species. Other hunting opportunities include woodcock, bear, and waterfowl. Trapping for species such as beaver, muskrat, fisher, otter, and mink is common. The beaver ponds and created wetlands provide some of the few local opportunities to hunt good numbers of waterfowl on public lands in this area of Wisconsin.

Current Management

Most wildlife management is done in conjunction with forestry practices. Beneficial practices are encouraged to promote a wide variety of wildlife ranging from no cutting in sensitive areas such as the Brule Bog to intensive management aimed at maintaining early successional forests, such as aspen and birch, through clear-cutting. Other important forest types are the oak-hardwoods, clay plain conifers, and jack pine forests and barrens. Leaving snag trees, protecting ephemeral ponds, leaving pockets of undisturbed trees and shrubs, and encouraging natural regeneration are other important wildlife considerations.

Wildlife management also includes actively maintaining scattered small forest openings (less than 10 acres in size), maintaining large grasslands (larger than 40 acres), restoring or creating wetlands, and conducting surveys. Mowing, herbicide, or hand cutting once every five years maintains small openings. Grasslands have been maintained with a combination of alternating mowing and burning about once every 3 years. Wetlands are restored or created using state, federal and private money dedicated to waterfowl habitat development and improvement. Wetlands are constructed on old farm fields that were cleared and had surface drainage installed to facilitate growing of grain or hay crops. Surveys include annual furbearer track counts; songbird surveys in open grasslands, pine barrens, and wetland areas; and deer yard surveys.

Issues Identified During Public Input Sessions:

- Aspen maintenance - too much or too little, impacts of regeneration cuts on forest composition and water quality.
- Deer - too many deer and their effect on forest regeneration and rare plants versus too few deer.
- Disposition and management of wetlands and grasslands on DNR and DOT lands (the 120 FMHA parcel and the 80 acre DOT mitigation site) on the west side of Clevedon Road.
- Clay Plain Conifer Forest – desired species composition and management techniques.
- Grasslands - should they be maintained and how much, or allowed to revert to forest;.
- Openings maintenance - are they natural, their purpose, and should we use herbicides.
- Wetlands - values and purpose, are they natural, and should there be more or less.